

one another of heresy, or political intrigue, or too strenuous activity on behalf of the fallen Licinius. Socrates, indeed, says that \*\* the majority of the Bishops " were levelling charges against one another. But they received no encouragement from Constantine. Seated there among them he produced the incriminatory documents from the folds of his toga, called for a brazier, and threw the rolls upon the fire, protesting with an oath that not one of them had been opened or read. "Christ," he said, " bids him who hopes for forgiveness forgive an erring brother." It was a dignified and noble rebuke. The story reads best in this, its simplest form, Theodoretus amplifies the Emperor's rebuke and puts into his mouth the dangerous doctrine that, if bishops sin, their offences ought to be hushed up, lest their flock be scandalised or be encouraged to follow their example. He would even, he said, throw his own purple over an offending bishop to avoid the evils and contagion of publicity.

Such was the opening of the Council. The Emperor had scored a great personal triumph and had set the bishops a notable example of magnanimity. But it was not imitated. No sooner had the actual business of the Council begun than the flood-gates of controversy were opened\*. According to Eusebius, the Emperor remained to listen to their mutual recriminations, giving ear patiently to all sides, and doing what he could to assuage animosities by making the most of everything that seemed to tend towards compromise. Unfortunately, the reports of the Council are strangely incomplete. It